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Specification for Patent Application

TITLE	Method and Apparatus for Operating Gaming Devices
APPLICANT	IGT
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The Claims Defining the Invention are as Follows

1. A progressive gaming system comprising:

a central computer coupled, at least indirectly, to gaming terminals each of which is coupled to a notification device for indicating the win of a progressive prize;

5 a first plurality of said gaming terminals being eligible for a first progressive prize, based on first contributions from said first plurality of gaming terminals;

a second plurality of said gaming terminals being eligible for a second progressive prize, based on second contributions from said second plurality of gaming terminals;

10 said central computer receiving information regarding said first contributions and transmitting information, when said first progressive prize has been won, to indicate a win using said notification device coupled to one of said first plurality of gaming terminals; and

15 said central computer receiving information regarding said second contributions and transmitting information when said second progressive prize has been won, to indicate a win using said notification device coupled to one of said second plurality of gaming terminals;

20 wherein the same said central computer calculates both the amount of said first progressive prize, when said first progressive prize has been won, and the amount of said second progressive prize, when said second progressive prize has been won.

2. A progressive gaming system, as claimed in claim 1, wherein said first and second pluralities of gaming terminals have at least one gaming terminal in common.

25 3. A progressive gaming system, as claimed in claim 1 or 2, further comprising a cluster controller which receives contribution information from at least some of said first plurality of gaming terminals and transmits said information regarding said first contributions to said central computer.

4. A progressive gaming system comprising a central computer coupled, at least indirectly, to gaming terminals each of which is coupled to a notification device for indicating the win of a progressive prize;

5 a first plurality of said gaming terminals being eligible for a first progressive prize, based on first contributions from said first plurality of gaming terminals;

a second plurality of said gaming terminals being eligible for a second progressive prize, based on second contributions from said second plurality of gaming terminals;

10 said central computer receiving information regarding said first contributions and transmitting information, when said first progressive prize has been won, to indicate a win using said notification device coupled to one of said first plurality of gaming terminals; and

15 said central computer receiving information regarding said second contributions and transmitting information, when said second progressive prize has been won, to indicate a win using said notification device coupled to one of said second plurality of gaming terminal;

wherein each of said first plurality of gaming terminals, following play on said gaming terminal, provides an output indicative of a result of said play;

20 wherein said central computer repeatedly receives, stores or transmits information indicative of a decision as to whether said first progressive prize has been won; and

wherein said decision is independent of said result of play in any of said first plurality of gaming terminals.

25 5. A progressive gaming system as claimed in claim 4, wherein a decision that said first progressive prize has been won is made only after an event selected from the group consisting of a push of a button, a predetermined result from a spin of a wheel of fortune, and a draw of a predetermined token from a plurality of tokens.

6. A method for providing a progressive gaming system implemented using a central computer coupled, at least indirectly, to gaming terminals each of which is coupled to a notification device for indicating the win of a progressive prize, the method comprising:

5 receiving, in said central computer, first information indicating contributions towards a first progressive prize from a first plurality of said gaming terminals eligible for said progressive prize;

10 receiving, in said central computer, second information indicating contributions towards a second progressive prize from a second plurality of said gaming terminals eligible for said second progressive prize;

transmitting from said central computer, when said first progressive prize has been won, information for activating at least one notification device coupled to one of said first plurality of gaming terminals; and

15 transmitting from said central computer, when said second progressive prize has been won, information for activating at least one notification device coupled to one of said second plurality of gaming terminals.

7. A method, as claimed in claim 6, wherein said first and second pluralities of gaming terminals have at least one gaming terminal in common.

8. A method, as claimed in claim 6 or 7, further comprising:

20 receiving, in a cluster controller, contribution information from at least some of said first plurality of gaming terminals and transmitting said information regarding said first contributions from said cluster controller to said central computer.

9. A method as claimed in any one of claims 6 to 8, further comprising:

25 providing output, by each of said first plurality of gaming terminals, following play on said gaming terminal, indicative of a result of said play; and

repeatedly transmitting information to said central computer indicative of a decision as to whether said first progressive prize has been won wherein said

decision is independent of said result of play in any of said first plurality of gaming terminals.

10. A method, as claimed in claim 9, wherein a decision that said first progressive prize has been won is made only after an event selected from the group
5 consisting of a push of a button, a predetermined result from a spin of a wheel of fortune, and a draw of a predetermined token from a plurality of tokens.

11. Apparatus for providing a progressive gaming system implemented using a central computer coupled, at least indirectly, to gaming terminals each of which is coupled to a notification device for indicating the win of a progressive prize, the
10 apparatus comprising:

means, in said central computer, for:

receiving, first information indicating contributions towards a first progressive prize from a first plurality of said gaming terminals eligible for said first progressive prize; and

15 receiving, second information indicating contributions towards a second progressive prize from a second plurality of said gaming terminals eligible for said second progressive prize; and

means, in said central computer, for:

20 transmitting from said central computer, when said first progressive prize has been won, information for activating at least one notification device coupled to one of said first plurality of gaming terminals; and

transmitting from said central computer, when said second progressive prize has been won, information for activating at least one

25 notification device coupled to one of said second plurality of gaming terminals.

12. A progressive gaming system as claimed in claim 4, wherein a decision that said first progressive prize has been won is made only after passage of a randomly selected time duration following a predetermined event.
13. A method as claimed in claim 9, wherein a decision that said first progressive prize has been won is made only after passage of a randomly selected time duration following a predetermined event.
14. A progressive gaming system, as claimed in claim any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein said central computer is constructed and arranged to select which gaming terminals to include in the first plurality of gaming terminals.
15. A progressive gaming system, as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 3 or 14, wherein said central computer is constructed and arranged to select which gaming terminals to include in the second plurality of gaming terminals.
16. A progressive gaming system, as claimed in claim 14 or 15, further comprising a user-operated input device coupled to said central computer to permit such gaming terminal selection responsive to user-effected action at said input device.
17. A progressive gaming system, as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 3 or 14 to 16, wherein said notification device comprises a display.
18. A progressive gaming system, as claimed in claim 17, wherein said display comprises a casino display.
19. A progressive gaming system, as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 3 or 14 to 18, wherein said notification device comprises means for making a bonus pay at one of said gaming terminals.
20. A progressive gaming system, as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 3 or 14 to 19, wherein said notification device comprises a credit meter that increments in response to a prize win.

21. A progressive gaming system, as claimed in any one of claims 4, 5 or 12, wherein said central computer is constructed and arranged to select which gaming terminals to include in the first plurality of gaming terminals.

22. A progressive gaming system, as claimed in any one of claims 4, 5, 12 or 21, wherein said central computer is constructed and arranged to select which gaming terminals to include in the second plurality of gaming terminals.

23. A progressive gaming system, as claimed in claim 21 or 22, further comprising a user-operated input device coupled to said central computer to permit such gaming terminal selection responsive to user-effected action at said input device.

24. A progressive gaming system, as claimed in any one of claims 4, 5, 12 or 21 to 23, wherein said notification device comprises a display.

25. A progressive gaming system, as claimed in claim 24, wherein said display comprises a casino display.

26. A progressive gaming system, as claimed in any one of claims 4, 5, 12 or 21 to 25, wherein said notification device comprises means for making a bonus pay at one of said gaming terminals.

27. A progressive gaming system, as claimed in any one of claims 4, 5, 12 or 21 to 26, wherein said notification device comprises a credit meter that increments in response to a prize win.

28. A method, as claimed in any one of claims 6 to 10 or 13, further comprising selecting which gaming terminals to include in the first plurality of gaming terminals responsive to central computer action.

29. A method, as claimed in any one of claims 6 to 10, 13 or 28, further comprising selecting which gaming terminals to include in the second plurality of gaming terminals responsive to central computer action.

30. A method, as claimed in claim 28 or 29, wherein said central computer is coupled to a user-operated input device and wherein selecting which gaming

terminals to include comprises selecting gaming terminals responsive to user-effected action at said input device.

31. A method, as claimed in any one of claims 6 to 10, 13 or 28 to 30, wherein said notification device comprises a display.

5 32. A method, as claimed in claim 31, wherein said display comprises a casino display.

33. A method, as claimed in any one of claims 6 to 10, 13 or 28 to 32, wherein said method further includes activating the notification device and wherein activating the notification device comprises making a bonus pay at one of said gaming
10 terminals.

34. A method, as claimed in claim 33, wherein making a bonus pay further comprises incrementing a credit meter.

35. Apparatus, as claimed in claim 11, wherein said central computer is constructed and arranged to select which gaming terminals to include in the first
15 plurality of gaming terminals.

36. Apparatus, as claimed in claim 11 or 35, wherein said central computer is constructed and arranged to select which gaming terminals to include in the second plurality of gaming terminals.

37. Apparatus, as claimed in claim 35 or 36, further comprising a user-operated
20 input device coupled to said central computer to permit such gaming terminal selection responsive to user-effected action at said input device.

38. Apparatus, as claimed in any one of claims 11 or 35 to 37, wherein said notification device comprises a display.

39. Apparatus, as claimed in any one of claims 11 or 35 to 38, wherein said
25 notification device comprises a casino display.

40. Apparatus, as claimed in any one of claims 11 or 35 to 39, wherein said notification device comprises means for making a bonus pay at one of said gaming terminals.

41. Apparatus, as claimed in any one of claims 11 or 35 to 40, wherein said notification device comprises a credit meter that increments in response to a prize win.

42. A progressive gaming system according to any one of claims 1 to 5, 12 or 14 to 27, wherein said central computer comprises a plurality of computers on a common network.

43. A progressive gaming system according to any one of 1 to 5, 12, 14 to 27 or 42, wherein winning at least one of the progressive prizes is independent of the result of play of any of the gaming terminals.

44. A method according to any one of claims 6 to 10, 13 or 28 to 34, wherein said central computer comprises a plurality of computers on a common network.

45. A method according to any one of claims 6 to 10, 13, 28 to 34 or 44, wherein winning at least one of the progressive prizes is independent of the result of play of any of the gaming terminals.

46. Apparatus according to any one of claims 11 or 35 to 41, wherein said central computer comprises a plurality of computers on a common network.

47. A method according to any one of claims 11, 35 to 41 or 46, wherein winning at least one of the progressive prizes is independent of the result of play of any of the gaming terminals.

48. A progressive gaming system substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

49. A method for providing a progressive gaming system implemented using central computer coupled, at least indirectly, to gaming terminals each of which is coupled to a notification device for indicating the win of a progressive prize,

substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

50. Apparatus for providing a progressive gaming system implemented using a central computer coupled, at least indirectly, to gaming terminals each of which is
- 5 coupled to a notification device for indicating the win of a progressive prize, substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

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